



ASHEVILLE TRANSIT COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
Police/Fire Training Room-Municipal Building
August 11, 2010 4:30-6:30

Attending:

Commission Members: Dave Erb, Tom Tomlin, Georgia M. Shannon, Kevin Jenkins, Paul Van Heden, Julie Mayfield

Staff: Mariate Echeverry, Janet GeorgeMurr, Edna Johnson, Amy Sawyer (Planning), Emily Ball (Planning)

Community members: Tom Herman of NCDOT, Ted Gammon and Jerry Nelson of Asheville Homeless Network

4:35 p.m.: Introduction of the Transit Commission Members, Staff and public.

Explanation of Public Comment Standards and Opportunities: Georgia M. Shannon read the Explanation of Public Comment.

Agenda Amendments: Under New Business: Long Range Transportation Planning and Mountain Express Letter; Under Staff Updates: Update on FTA Triennial Review and Black Mountain Route.

July 14, 2010 Transit Commission Minutes – was reviewed. Tom T. motioned to approve the minutes; Paul second the motion with all TC in favor.

Welcome Public – Introductions and Pre-Meeting Public Comment

- Tom Herman, NCDOT
- Ted Gammon, Asheville Homeless Network (AHN)
- Jerry Nelson, Asheville Homeless Network (AHN)
- Amy Sawyer, Planning Department
- Emily Ball, Planning Department
- Staff and Transit Commission members introduced themselves.

Public Comment Part I: None

Transit Commission members' experiences on ATS this past month:

- Kevin stated that there are fewer bus stop signs in the downtown area. Edna stated that Route 28 will not stop. Mariate agreed that there are few bus stops downtown. The ATS policy is if there is not a sign, the bus will not stop. Kevin stated that close to Pritchard Park, there a few places where the bus stops without bus stop signs. Edna stated that she is looking through all of the stops and the new routes which are in progress.

- Julie stated that her bus riding experiences have been all good, but, she had a question regarding the regulation AC on the bus. Mariate mentioned that there is not a policy on running the AC on the buses. Due to the age of the buses, some air-conditioners cannot run for any length of time. Edna mentioned that at times there are weather fluctuations and the mechanics of the bus itself. Julie suggested for fuel efficiency and since there is not a policy for the AC to ask the bus driver to run a comfortable recommended temperature. Julie also mentioned if the bus drivers are trained to maximize fuel efficiency. Edna will emphasize with the driver on fuel efficiency depending on the circumstances of the driver. Georgia asked if there is training of the driver. Edna stated that the drivers are trained in idling, stopping, braking, etc. Dave stated that the braking is less fuel efficient than idling, stopping or accelerating.
- Tom stated that Route 41 was running late on several occasions. Edna stated that she is working on the "time not being so tight." Tom mentioned that Route 13 was 15 minutes late and the next day 16 minutes late.
- Dave – three times the bus route was 40 minutes late or running "hot." Dave walked for 30 minutes to his destination, therefore, missed his appointment. This month's bus ride was horrible and unacceptable. Edna stated that she understands the frustration and with the growth of Asheville there is a need for more equipment and bus drivers.
- **Presentation:** After Ted Gammon of AHN read the Asheville Homeless Network Proposal to Asheville City Council (see attached), a discussion among the TC members; Amy Sawyer and Emily Ball of the Planning Department, Transportation staff, Mr. Gammon and Mr. Nelson. Julie M. made the following motion: "Transit Commission recognizes the important role of public transportation in transitioning the homeless into more stable lives, and the Transit Commission support increasing the availability of transit passes to the homeless. Therefore, Transit Commission asks City Council and the Homeless Initiative Advisory Commission to explore making funding available for monthly and daily passes to the homeless population, particularly if the passes can be made available to those being served by other City services and programs. Paul seconded the motion of the above notice and all were in favor.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Announcement from J Neal Jackson:** Paul stated that J Neal will be moving to SC and that he has emailed J Neal to obtain more specifics. At this time, J Neal has not responded. Therefore, since J Neal has missed 3 consecutive meetings, he will be removed from the Transit Commission. Paul will email Maggie Burleson, City Clerk, to remove J Neal and to request the City Clerk to submit for applications for this position.
- **Long Range Transportation Plan-MPO:** Julie stated that public comment (ends on 9/22) for the 25 year plan on a number of projects, such as bike/pedestrian project, etc. Julie posed a question: "Does COA weight in on the plan?" Brownie Newman and Jan Davis sit in on the MPO. Is it appropriate for Transit Commission to send a letter in support of funding? Mariate stated that there are two committees: Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) and Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) that the

City participates actively in developing the long range plan, if TC would like to make a statement of support. Paul stated that he supports the letter and that this issue will be placed on September's agenda. Mariate stated that the long range plan is so broad and 30 years ahead. Transit is so dynamic and what our needs will be as we approach 10 years. Tier 1 – express bus to Hendersonville; Tier 2 – express bus to Waynesville. Julie made a motion to have TC review LRTP and come to the next meeting with suggestions. Mariate suggested submitting the questions/comments to her prior to the meeting. Julie stated that motion is to submit a draft comment letter on the LRTP to Mariate and staff to bring back to the September TC meeting. Paul seconded the motion and all in favor.

- **Mountain Express letter:** Paul read the letter from Greg Watson of Asheville (see attached.) Edna stated that the buses are cleaned every night by two of ATS employees. Julie mentioned that this is a criticism of ATS and that TC should respond. Paul will write the response to the Mountain Express letter. Mariate mentioned that COA does not respond or engage in a response to Mountain Express. Julie stated as a citizen, the TC has an obligation to respond. Dave asked if this should be a letter or an article. Georgia suggested not responding to the letter. Tom T mentioned that not responding about the issue, when it is not true, is not appropriate. Kevin ask how much to charge for fares to bring ATS in improving standards. Mariate mentioned \$5 to \$6 per person which could add more routes which would be more productive. Dave asked what the budget is for Transit and Mariate stated it is \$5M and the ridership is approximately 1.5M. The Transit Master Plan is adopted for improvements, but not yet implemented due to funding.

OLD BUSINESS: None

STAFF UPDATES:

- **RFP for Marketing Plan:** Mariate stated that the RFP was released on 8/12; RFP proposal due by 8/24; to Council on 9/14; work on developing a marketing plan on 9/15 or 9/20. Mariate asked to have one of the TC members to serve on the RFP Committee for the Marketing Evaluation for 8/24, 26, 27/10. Paul volunteered to serve on the RFP Peer Review Committee, since he was on the Transit Master Plan-Implementation Plan. Julie made the motion for Paul to serve on the RFP Peer Review Committee – all were in favor. Paul will update TC members at the TC meetings. Mariate expects to roll out the marketing plan in January, 2011.
- **Status of new grant for 5 new buses:** Mariate stated that a grant was applied for and approved by City Council through NCDOT for match funding of 4 diesel buses. Then another grant for one more diesel is now being applied for. Edna and staff are working on the bid and there is no other contract to piggyback. The buses will be 30 feet long. The total new buses are: 8 diesel; 7 hybrids at the cost of: \$600,000 for each hybrid and \$400,000 for each diesel bus. An approximate delivery of the buses would be more than a year; the five hybrids will be arriving in January 2011.
- **Status of implementing new routes:** Tom T stated that he would like to be on the committee for implementing the new routes. Mariate stated that the new routes are

already outlined in the Transit Master Plan and there will not be a committee for implementing the routes.

- **Bele Chere outcome for transit:** Edna stated that ATS did very well with 15,938 passengers with no complaints. The amount of fares received was \$7,500.00.
- **ADA reports:** Tom asked if COA was responsible for ADA reporting or is Mountain Mobility responsible. Mariate stated that Mountain Mobility is responsible for the ADA reporting.
- **FTA Triennial Review:** Mariate stated that the FTA Triennial Review was performed for two days on 7/28 & 29/10. There were 24 areas that were checked and Mariate was happy to report that there was only one finding, which was easily corrected.
- **Black Mountain Route:** Black Mountain Route received an extension for 5 more months of funding and Mountain Mobility was left out of the email from Miriam Perry. Staff will be applying for JARC funding through MPO to run the route for another year.
- **Edna Johnson:** Mariate announced that Edna Johnson will be leaving ATS and returning to Texas. Her husband's job is calling him back to TX. The new GM is Norman Schenck from Tyler TX. Edna expressed her appreciation of ATS and stated that for a town the size of Asheville there is good support in building infrastructure.

MEETING SUMMARY:

- **Announcements, events, transit commission members' involvement related to transit.**
- **Agenda items for 9/8/10:**
 - Letter of support to the Long Range Transportation Planning Committee-MPO
 - Mountain Express response letter to Greg Watson
 - TC transit experiences in riding the bus
 - Paul to update TC on RFP Marketing Peer Review Committee meetings
 - Presentation by Dave Erb on Energy Consumption

Adjourned: 6:40 pm

September 15, 2010

French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization
339 New Leicester Hwy, Suite 140
Asheville, NC 28806

Re: Draft Long Range Transportation Plan

Dear MPO:

Please accept these comments on the draft Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) on behalf of the City of Asheville Transit Commission. These comments do not represent the position of the City of Asheville or its staff, but only those of the citizen members of the Transit Commission. The bulk of our comments concern the Public Transportation section, but we also offer comments on two other issues.

Public Transportation

As an initial matter, we note that demand for public transportation is high in this region. Residents of Asheville are clamoring for more frequent bus service, for Sunday service, and to keep and restore the routes to Black Mountain and Weaverville, respectively. Bus service in other counties is also heavily used and could easily be increased were there the capital and operating costs to expand those systems. All across the country, we see examples of public transit not just meeting but exceeding ridership expectations more quickly than anticipated (e.g. Charlotte's light rail system and Atlanta's express buses), and we believe the same would be true in this region.

We also note that improving regional public transportation systems has been cited as a priority in other regional plans. Of particular note is the Land of Sky's 2007 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, which includes transportation and air quality as one of its primary goals. Under that goal are the objectives of reducing vehicle miles travelled by 20% by 2017 and providing, "21st century, multi-modal transportation to the entire Five-County transportation planning region, featuring light rail infrastructure and increased public transit options linking nodes of high-density development."

We agree that creating a comprehensive, modern transportation system that will reduce vehicle miles travelled and improve air quality is critical to this region's long term success and the quality of life of its residents. At present, we do not believe the current LRTP reflects that priority in terms of its projects or funding priorities. While we note with approval the inclusion of [much/all] of the costs of implementing the new Asheville Transit Master Plan, significant support for Mountain Mobility and the transit systems in Henderson and Haywood Counties, and two new express bus lines, these projects do not reflect a regional approach to public transportation that will create an integrated, seamless system allowing citizens to easily move throughout the region without a car.

While it is too late to make significant changes to the current LRTP, we encourage the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPO) to engage in a renewed regional planning effort and include in the next LRTP projects and funding that will create a robust, regional public transportation system.

One such way the TAC could do this is to revive the regional transit "Vision Network" created as part of the 2005 LRTP planning process. That network included 354 route-miles, 12 hourly bus routes from Asheville to neighboring communities, high frequency local service, a downtown Asheville circulator, neighborhood transfer centers, and 21 park and ride lots. We ask the TAC to revive this plan, update it, and run it against a model that adequately reflects the increased transit use on highway traffic and congestion. A renewed and revised Vision Network could, and perhaps should, become the main framework for the next LRTP.

Another way the TAC and MPO could support expanded public transportation services in the region is to lead in the search for additional funding. Two options are for the MPO's counties to hold referenda on creating a ¼ cent sales tax or for them to impose a service charge on license plates, the proceeds of which would be dedicated to transit. The MPO could recommend implementation of one or both of these options and, since the TAC is made up of elected officials, those officeholders could take these initiatives back to their local jurisdictions and work for their implementation.

Finally, we support the continued direction of available federal funds toward transit projects and the MPO's intent to develop a mode-neutral funding prioritization process that respects the needs and values of the region. And if Asheville becomes the recipient of funding through the federal Sustainable Communities Initiative, we particularly encourage funding of projects that promote long-term, sustainable transportation solutions.

Land Use

We appreciate the LRTP's chapter on land use and the suggestion that there needs to be a strong link between land use and transportation planning. That is particularly true if we are to create an effective regional public transportation system. We therefore support the LRTP's recommendations around land use, including that the MPO develop specific methods for coordinating land use and transportation decisions as our region continues to grow.

Bike/Pedestrian Projects

Because many people access public transportation by foot and bicycle, we support those bike and pedestrian projects that improve safe access to public transportation systems. We also support those bike and pedestrian projects that simply make it easier and safer for citizens to move around the region using those transportation modes instead of vehicles, as that helps improve air quality and the long-term livability of the region.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the LRTP, and we stand ready to help the MPO in future planning efforts around developing a regional public transportation system.

Sincerely,

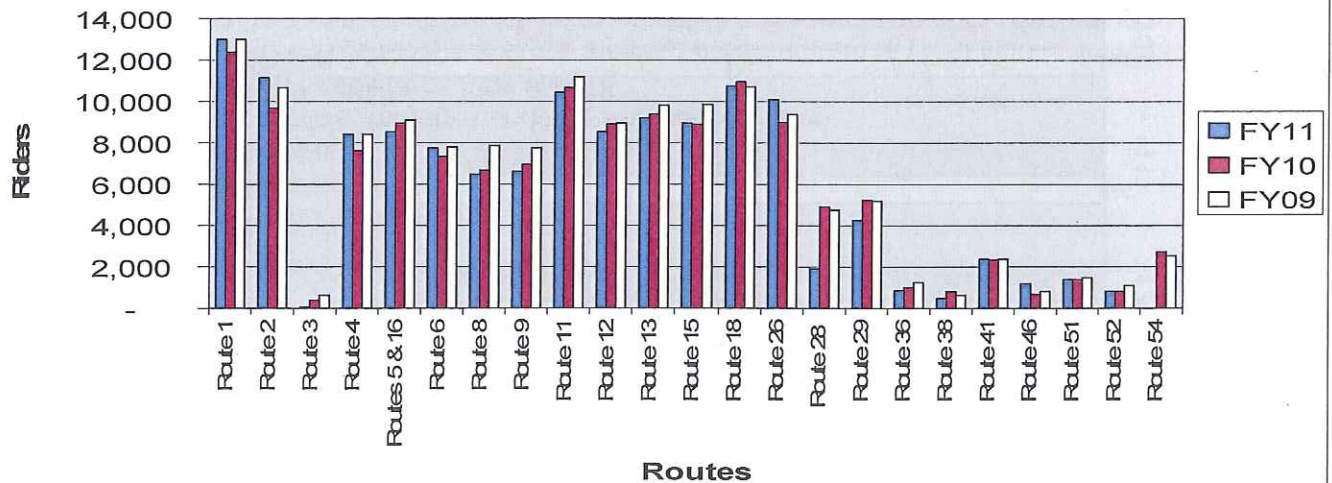
City of Asheville Transit Commission
Paul Van Heden, Chair
David Erb
Kevin Jenkins

Julie Mayfield
Georgia Shannon
Tom Tomlin

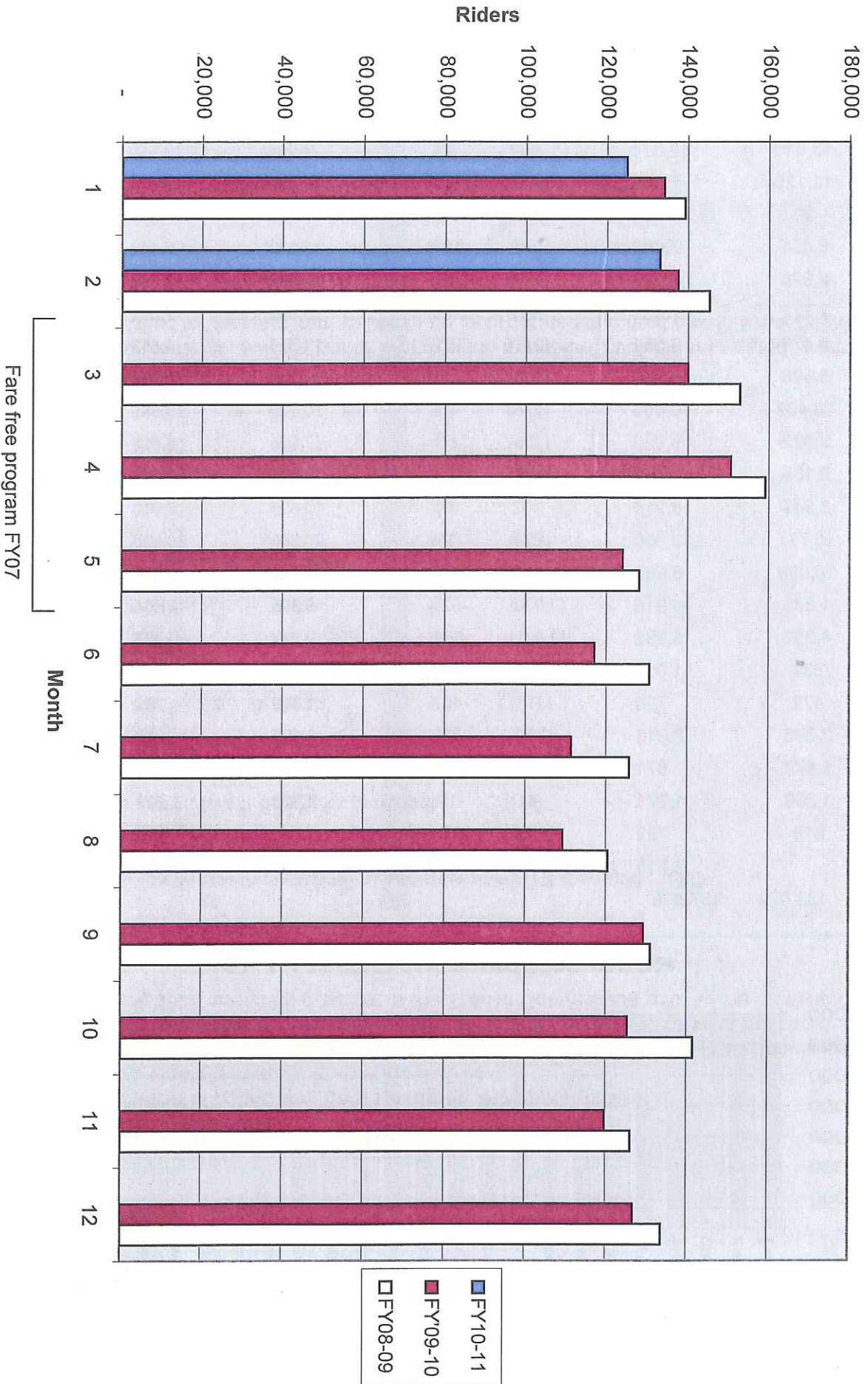
Route Ridership-August, FY10-11

Current Month					Fiscal Year to Date			
Route	This Year	Last Year	Change	Delta	This Year	Last Year	Change	Delta
1	13,010	12,370	640	5%	24,706	12,370	12,336	100%
2	11,126	9,685	1,441	15%	19,712	9,685	10,027	104%
3	30	385	(355)	-92%	385	385	0	0%
4	8,431	7,642	789	10%	15,630	7,642	7,988	105%
5 & 16	8,526	8,943	(417)	-5%	17,565	8,943	8,622	96%
6	7,772	7,331	441	6%	15,004	7,331	7,673	105%
8	6,472	6,651	(179)	-3%	12,515	6,651	5,864	88%
9	6,596	6,960	(364)	-5%	13,738	6,960	6,778	97%
11	10,409	10,685	(276)	-3%	20,129	10,685	9,444	88%
12	8,522	8,928	(406)	-5%	17,106	8,928	8,178	92%
13	9,185	9,377	(192)	-2%	18,298	9,377	8,921	95%
15	8,942	8,910	32	0%	17,635	8,910	8,725	98%
18	10,777	10,930	(153)	-1%	20,088	10,930	9,158	84%
26	10,098	8,988	1,110	12%	18,222	8,988		103%
28	1,886	4,916	(3,030)	-62%	6,396	4,916	1,480	30%
29	4,232	5,233	(1,001)	-19%	9,217	5,233	3,984	76%
36	837	1,002	(165)	-16%	1,836	1,002	834	83%
38	472	790	(318)	-40%	1,319	790	529	67%
41	2,393	2,313	80	3%	4,695	2,313	2,382	103%
46	1,177	671	506	75%	1,814	671	1,143	170%
51	1,360	1,371	(11)	-1%	2,522	1,371	1,151	84%
52	819	793	26	3%	1,275	793	482	61%
54		2,715	(2,715)	-100%	2,715	2,715	0	100%
Totals	133,072	137,589						

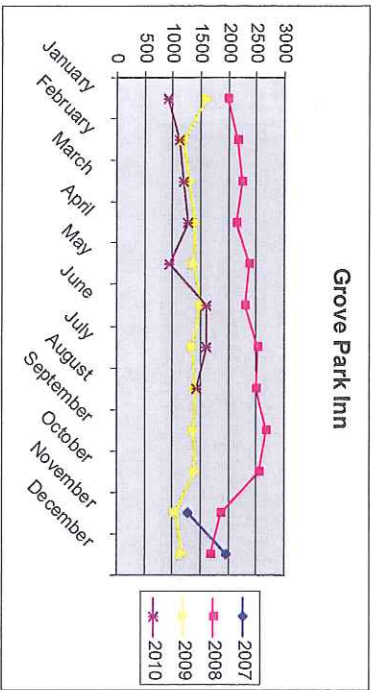
Route comparison August FY'10



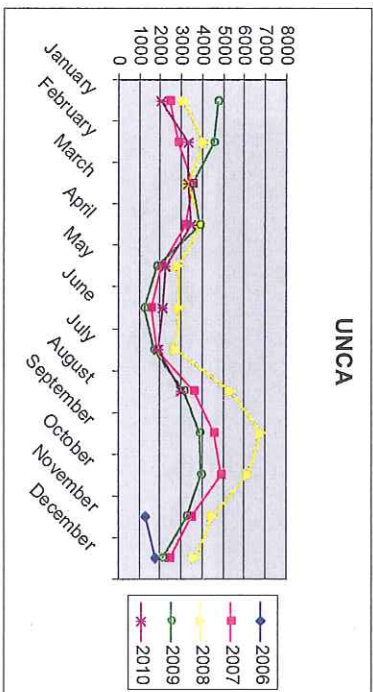
Ridership Comparison



Grove Park Inn				
	2007	2008	2009	2010
January		1993	1592	913
February		2156	1198	1119
March		2225	1305	1205
April		2128	1386	1268
May		2356	1366	942
June		2298	1509	1610
July		2520	1345	1609
August		2494	1387	1432
September		2659	1376	
October		2552	1410	
November	1268	1863	1042	
December	1969	1676	1167	
Year Totals	3237	26920	16083	10098
Overall Totals	56338			



UNCA					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
January		2433	3140	4777	2020
February		2860	4041	4562	3346
March		3536	3346	3554	3335
April		3163	3906	3891	3433
May		2010	2870	1803	2248
June		1529	2882	1253	2129
July		1816	2692	1677	1890
August		3611	5336	3118	3013
September		4512	6755	3897	
October		4881	6169	3935	
November	1285	3452	4444	3234	
December	1754	2443	3649	2124	
Year Totals	3039	36246	49230	37825	21414
Overall Totals	147754				



Buncombe County			
	2008	2009	2010
January		231	127
February		236	222
March		204	275
April		366	264
May		302	189
June		319	259
July		301	208
August		324	167
September		334	
October	195	251	
November	209	199	
December	187	165	
Year Totals	591	3232	1711
Overall Totals	5534		

City of Asheville			
	2008	2009	2010
January		1306	530
February		779	664
March		733	916
April		850	906
May		643	794
June		793	804
July	976	838	926
August	797	774	767
September	940	844	
October	1018	873	
November	770	735	
December	835	575	
Year Totals	5336	9743	6307
Overall Totals	21386		

Greenlife			
	2008	2009	2010
January		188	100
February		156	80
March		138	94
April		101	85
May		113	131
June	103	90	75
July	205	82	88
August	177	84	103
September	164	117	
October	181	125	
November	152	93	
December	185	109	
Year Totals	1167	1396	756
Overall Totals	3319		

